

The Secret of Contentment

Phil 4:10-13

March 7, 2021

Phil 4:10-13 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity. 11 Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. 12 I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. 13 I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

The Philippian church had been founded by Paul 10 - 12 years earlier. From the beginning they supported Paul financially but for some unknown reason ("you lacked opportunity") they stopped sending support to him. Their giving was now "revived".

revived = To thrive or flourish again as trees or plants which, though they seem dead in the winter, revive and flourish again in spring.

Their concern for Paul caused him to rejoice in the Lord greatly.

greatly = literally as 'I am-intense joyous in the Lord,'

I have learned - The words "have learned" are in a construction in the Greek which speaks of entrance into a new condition. It is, "I have come to learn." Paul had not always known that. He had been reared in the lap of luxury and had never known want as a young man.

to be content

content = Paul uses one of the great words of pagan ethics (autarkes) which means entirely self-sufficient. Self-sufficiency was the highest aim of Stoic ethics; by it the Stoics meant a state of mind in which a man was absolutely independent of all things and of all people. They propose to reach that state by a certain pathway of the mind

1. They proposed to eliminate all desire. The Stoics believed that the only way to be content was to abolish all desire until a man had come to a state when nothing and no one was essential to him.

2. They proposed to eliminate all emotion until a man had come to a stage when he did not care what happened either to himself or to anyone else. The Stoic aim was to abolish every feeling of the human heart.

3. This was to be done by a deliberate act of the will which saw in everything the will of God. They believe that literally nothing could happen which was not the will of God, whether good or bad.

In order to achieve contentment, the Stoics abolished all desires and eliminated all emotions.

Stoic's contentment versus Paul's contentment

Stoic	Paul
"I will learn contentment by a deliberate act of my own will."	"I can do all things through Christ who infuses his strength into me."
Contentment was a human achievement.	Contentment was a divine gift.
They became self-sufficient, independence	Paul was God-sufficient, dependent on Christ

2Cor 9:8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed;

1Tim 6:6 But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment.

Heb 13:5-6 Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU," 6 so that we confidently say, "THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT WILL MAN DO TO ME?"

Contentment is not dependent upon your circumstances. Paul was content in both:

Humble means	Prosperity
Hunger	Being filled (full)
Suffering need	Having abundance

I can do all things through Him who strengthens me (v. 13).

2Cor 3:4-5 Such confidence we have through Christ toward God. 5 Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God,

Isa 40:29-31 He gives strength to the weary, And to him who lacks might He increases power. 30 Though youths grow weary and tired, And vigorous young men stumble badly, 31 Yet those who wait for the LORD Will gain new strength; They will mount up with wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary.

Isa 41:10 'Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.'

Isa 45:24 "They will say of Me, 'Only in the LORD are righteousness and strength.' ...

Eph 3:16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man,

Eph 6:10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. (Eph 6:10-17)

References used in this study:

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